C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000339

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA, NSC FOR
SHAPIRO/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2014
TAGS: PREL PGOV ECON KWBG OREP IS QA KDEM
SUBJECT: EREKAT TO CODELS: PA SEEKING A NATIONAL UNITY
GOVERNMENT THAT RESPECTS PLO AGREEMENTS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat told
CODELs Lieberman, Cardin, and Baird that the conflict in Gaza
deepened the divisions between the West Bank and Gaza.
Erekat said that Fatah and Hamas need to overcome their
differences and forge a national unity government that
respects prior PLO agreements (i.e. those with Israel). As
part of that process, he said that Fatah needs a new, younger
leadership to compete with Hamas. Erekat said that IDF
incursions in Area A in the West Bank undermine efforts to
strengthen the legitimacy of PA security forces (PASF). He
noted that the Gaza conflict had also increased regional
tensions, and complained that Qatar is actively supporting
Hamas. End summary.

Palestinian divisions and reconciliation

¶2. (C) During the period February 15-19, PLO Chief
Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat met separately with CODELs Lieberman,
Cardin, and Baird. Erekat said the conflict in Gaza did not
stem "the tide of Hamas," arguing that Israel had
intentionally deepened the division between the West Bank and
Gaza in order to claim there is no viable negotiating partner
on the Palestinian side. Erekat expressed hope that Fatah
and Hamas would overcome their differences and forge a
national unity government, but added any government must
respect prior PLO commitments, including its agreements with
Israel. He said that Fatah will reconcile with Hamas if the
latter accepts a two-state solution, acknowledges previous
PLO agreements, and agrees to fair and transparent elections.
 The PA, he said, needs to represent all Palestinians in the
West Bank and Gaza in order to promote a viable negotiated
outcome. He claimed that Palestinians want a true democracy,
and that "Hamas has failed the Palestinians."

¶3. (C) Erekat said he wants Fatah to hold its sixth party
Congress as soon as possible, underscoring that "Fatah needs
an overhaul." Erekat noted that Fatah reform is crucial to
the future of a Palestinian state, saying that Fatah and the
PLC need a new, younger leadership. Erekat (who was born in
1955) noted to members of Codel Cardin that he is the
youngest member of Fath's leadership. This is "shameful," he
said.

Security services

¶4. (C) Erekat told the CODELs that Israeli actions in the
West Bank continue to undermine PA President Abbas and PM
Fayyad, despite the successes of the PASF. He noted that IDF
incursions in the West Bank undermine PA efforts to establish
its authority. Erekat said that senior Israeli defense
officials privately praised PASF performance during the IDF

military operations in Gaza, but that the GOI does not
translate that praise into actions that can be felt by
Palestinians. As a result, the PA appears to be acting
solely on behalf of the GOI. Erekat repeated that the PA is
open to a third-party
security presence in the West Bank/Gaza as a part of a
permanent status agreement.

Qatar

¶6. (C) Erekat noted that the conflict in Gaza had also
deepened divisions within the Arab world, at the expense of
the PA and Arab moderates. He expressed anger particularly
toward Qatar for its recent political and financial support
for Hamas. Referring to reports of "people meeting in Doha"
to plan a "new PLO," Erekat asked members of Codel Cardin,
"What is Qatar doing?" Erekat expressed incredulity at
Qatar's dual role as a base for "Centcom" as well as for "the
politburo of the Muslim Brotherhood."

¶7. (U) Codels Lieberman, Cardin, and Baird did not have the
opportunity to clear this message.
WALLES